

Message Text

SECRET

PAGE 01 BEIRUT 06373 181156Z

53

ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 NSCE-00 USIE-00 INRE-00 CCO-00

CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05

PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 AID-05 A-01 DHA-02 FBO-02

OMB-01 OPR-02 SCS-03 SCA-01 SCCT-01 SY-05 USSS-00

COME-00 OC-06 PER-01 /081 W
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O 181122Z JUL 76

FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

TO SECSTATE WASHDC NIACT IMMEDIATE 1198

S E C R E T 6373

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, PINS, PINT, LE, ASEC

SUBJECT: EFFECT OF OUR EVACUATION ANNOUNCEMENT ON BEIRUT POPULACE

1. OUR ANNOUNCEMENT RE UPCOMING EVACUATION HAS CAUSED DEEP APPREHENSION IN LEBANESE COMMUNITY IN RAS BEIRUT. REASON IS THAT IT COMES AT TIME OF ALLEGATIONS OF SYRIAN-MARONITE-US SCHEME TO TAKE OVER

REST OF LEBANON (SEPTELS) AND ANNOUNCEMENTS BY MARONITE RADIO (AMCHIT) LAST COUPLE OF DAYS THAT MARONITES WILL SOON LIBERATE THIS SECTOR AND CITIZENS OF WEST BEIRUT SHOULD LEAVE. NEW YORK TIMES CORRESPONDENT HAS GONE SO FAR AS OO CLAIM EFFECTS HAVE BEEN "DISASTROUS." IT WAS PARTLY IN ANTICIPATION OF SUCH ADVERSE EFFECTS, OF COURSE, THAT WE MADE RECOMMENDATION, ACCEPTED BY DEPT, THAT WE NOT RPT NOT CLOSE DOWN EMBASSY FULLY.

2. I MENTION FOREGOING BECAUSE, WHILE ANNOUNCEMENT HAS HAD DESIRED EFFECT OF INDUCING SIGNIFICANT NUMBER OF AMERICANS, FINALLY, TO OPT TO LEAVE LEBANON, WE NEED NOW TO POUR SOME OIL ON TROUBLED LEBANESE WATERS. WE DON'T WANT TO PLAY INTO HANDS OF THOSE WHO WANT OUR LEBANESE FRIENDS IN WEST BEIRUT TO PANIC.

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PAGE 02 BEIRUT 06373 181156Z

3. WITH THIS IN MIND, I AM PROPOSING IN SEPTTEL THAT WE BE

AUTHORIZED TO ISSUE STATEMENT IN PRESS TOMORROW CATEGORICALLY DENYING EXISTENCE OF THIS "CONSPIRACY" AND CLARIFYING ONCE AGAIN US OBJECTIVES IN LEBANON. (ALTERNATIVE IS FOR DEPARTMENT SPOKESMAN TO MAKE ANNOUNCEMENT, PROVIDING HE COULD DO SO TODAY, SUNDAY. OTHERWISE IT WON'T REACH LOCAL MONDAY'S PRESS.) ALSO, IN MY CONVERSATIONS WITH LEBANESE AND ALL OTHERS, I HAVE LEANED OVER BACKWARDS TO EMPHASIZE THAT FACTOR THAT TIPPED SCALES IN FAVOR OF THIS EVACUATION, STATED CLEARLY IN PUBLIC ANNOUNCEMENTS, IS DETERIORATING LIVING CONDITIONS AND LACK OF SUPPLIES. I HAVE NOTED N

AT SAME TIME, THAT SECURITY SITUATION CONTINUES TO BE BAD AND FOR THIS REASON ALSO, AS IN CASE OF PREVIOUS EVACUATIONS, WE CONTINUE URGE THAT AMERICANS LEAVE. BUT I HAVE STRONGLY DISCOURAGED SPECULATION OF ATTACK ON BEIRUT, ESPECIALLY BECAUSE WE ARE GETTING ECHOES HERE OF ALLEGED (AND OBVIOUSLY UNAUTHORIZED) WASHINGTON STATEMENTS TO THIS EFFECT.

4. ANOTHER THING THAT WOULD HELP CALM LEBANESE NERVES AT THIS POINT WOULD BE FOR ME TO POSTPONE MY DEPARTURE FROM BEIRUT FOR AT LEAST TWO OR MORE DAYS. I HAVE DISCOURAGED EVERYONE FROM BELIEVING THAT I AM LEAVING TUESDAY AND HAVE HEARD EXPRESSIONS OF RELIEF AT THIS FACT. BOTH PLO AND EGYPTIAN EMB HAVE EXPRESSED CONCERN AT REPORTS COMING OF OF WASHINGTON THAT I WILL BE LEAVING AT SAME TIME AS EVACUEES. PRESUMABLY THEY FEEL THIS WOULD COMPLICATE THEIR SECURITY ARRANGEMENTS. SO I SUGGEST AND URGE THAT WE LET A LITTLE TIME ELAPSE BETWEEN DEPARTURE OF EVACUEES AND MY QUIET AND UNANNOUNCED DEPARTURE. IT WOULD BE HELPFUL IF WE GOT WORD AROUND THAT I WAS NOT ACCOMPANYING THE EVACUEES.

5. THIS HAS ADDED ADVANTAGE OF GIVING US MORE TIME TO DECIDE IN LIGHT OF DEVELOPING POLITICAL CIRCUMSTANCES, HOW TO EVACUATE ME. HELICOPTER EVAC IS UNDESIRABLE FROM ALL POINTS OF VIEW IF THERE CONTINUES TO BE SPECULATION, STIRRED UP IN LAST COUPLE OF DAYS, RE IMPENDING MILITARY ACTION OF SOME SORT. THERE IS ALWAYS FALLBACK OF LEAVING BY TWO-CAR CONVOY WITH ARMED PLO ESCORT, EFFECTED IN SUCH A MANNER AS TO APPEAR THAT I AM LEAVING EMBASSY TO MAKE ROUTINE CALL--AS I HAVE BEEN DOING ON REGULAR BASIS IN THIS MANNER THUS FAR.
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